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RESCUING THE MOLECULES; WELCOMING THE UNLIKELY Introducing Children to Holy Communion Part Two

1 Last month, faithful reader, I ventured to present an interpretation of Holy Communion to children, based on Soren Kierkegaard's metaphor for worship, without using his actual figure of speech. As always when I attempt a "children's sermon" on Sunday, I make it a point to address their parents as well – the grown-ups in the room – on the principle that the grown-ups get as much out of the moment as kids do. In both cases – kids and adults – it's an opportunity for some serious mystagogy. [Essay 162](#) above.

2 I'll do the same in this posting as well. And, as last month, I'll try to speak in language that kids can understand. The grown-ups like it that way too.

3 Aside: A good principle when preaching: Never use a fancy word when a simple one will do. A second good principle in preaching: Do indeed use a fancy word every now and then – a theological concept, for example, like eschatological prolepsis – but *never* without unpacking it, explaining it, translating it from its Greek roots, for example. See [Essay 30](#) above. Such a practice compliments your hearers, even if your hearers are kids...

4 OK. So here's how I'd extend from last month my remarks to kids about Holy Communion. No need to regard these two samples of children's sermons as a kind of two part mini-series. They can each stand on their own. And each, together or separate, constitute a fine introduction, I like to think, to sacramental worship generally – the single most significant distinction between truly "catholic" Christian worship and all other worship, "protestant" Christian as well as Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, secularist, and atheist. (Wow! That's quite a claim. But I'll stick with it.)

5 Once again, as in [Essay 184](#), I'll use my talking-to-kids voice in what follows.

6 Gather around me, kids, and sit here on the chancel steps. I'll sit in this chair with arms, and I'll angle my chair so the grown-ups can listen too. They like to see your faces, but they also like to hear what you're hearing.

7 Let's play a little game. I'm going to ask you a whole set of questions. I already know the answers. But I want you to see if you know these things too.

8 Here goes: What are some of the things we do when we come to church on Sunday? You holler 'em out, OK?

9 Pray to God? Yep, that's one.

10 Sing songs and hymns? Yep, that's another.

11 Listen to somebody read from the Bible? Very good.

12 Listen to Pastor preach a sermon? Still another thing we do. A lot of time you're in your own Sunday School class then. But you know this happens, eh?

13 There's one more thing I'm thinking of. Eat a little bread and drink a little sip of wine? That's what I'm thinking of. Very good.

14 Now we call that Holy Communion, although there are other names for this that other people use. Some Christians call it Mass. Some call it Eucharist. We call it Holy Communion. But it's the same thing: a Christian service where we pray, and sing hymns, and hear from the Bible, and listen to a sermon – and where we eat and drink. Just a little piece of bread, just a little sip of wine. But it's a kind of meal. You could probably live on it, if you didn't eat or drink anything else.

15 Now why do you suppose we do that in our worship: eat and drink? You probably won't eat and drink every Sunday in another church. In fact, when I was your age, we had Communion in my church four times a year! But now we have Communion every Sunday! How come?

16 Here we are today, eating and drinking in Church every Sunday. You have to chew that bread and swallow that wine. It goes down your throat into your stomach. You digest there and metabolize – that's a big word that means this food, even this little taste of food, goes right to your muscles and bones and blood and nerves. So eating and drinking keeps you alive!

17 It's as if God wants to feed you, to keep you alive, to heal you. You grown-ups: I like to remind you that God wants to rescue you to the level of your molecules. It's not just your thoughts or your beliefs or your words or your actions that God is concerned with. It's your body too. The molecules. The atoms. That's a big part of what the Holy Communion is about.

18 And what God wants to do for *you* - keep you alive and healthy, to heal you - God wants to do that very same thing *for the whole world*: Animals and plants. The rivers and oceans. The atmosphere, the air we breathe, the hole in the ozone layer. The whole creation. Even the stones and the stars. That's how important the Holy Communion is. It reminds you to care for your body and for the body of this whole lovely world – the way God does! I think that's neat.

19 Grown-ups: Holy Communion every Sunday is therefore an ecological reminder.

20 Now let's ask: Who can eat and drink in this church? Again, I'll ask some questions, and I know the answer, and the answer will be "no" but I want you to holler it out nice and loud: No!

21 Surely only grown-ups can eat and drink here, right? No? Children can eat and drink too? Wonderful! When I was your age, only grown-ups could eat and drink in my church. Now you say even little kids can? Terrific!

22 Well, how about this one: You surely have to know how to read and write to eat and drink here, right? No? Even a little kid who cannot read is welcome to eat and drink here? Wonderful!

23 How about a *grown-up* who cannot read? There are even some grown-ups here who can't read. Surely they're not welcome? No? They *are* welcome? Wonderful!

24 How about girls? Only boys and men can eat and drink here, right? No girls or women allowed? No? You mean boys and even girls are welcome? Wonderful!

25 How about poor people? Poor people can't eat and drink in our Holy Communion, right? Only rich people. No? You mean poor people are welcome here? Wonderful! But maybe poor people don't get as *much* as rich people, correct? Rich people get more, right? No? Wrong? You mean all people, rich and poor, *get the same*? That's terrific!

26 How about naughty kids? Naughty kids can't eat here, only good kids, right? No bossy kids: You can't come here if you're bossy, right? No? You mean I don't even have to be *good*? Wonderful!

27 So. You grown-ups: Holy Communion every Sunday is also a reminder of God's radical embrace. All are welcome here: old and young, rich and poor, black and white, male and female, gay and straight, good people and bad people. They're not all the sort of people you or I would be likely to welcome. That's a picture of radical, inclusive justice. You won't find that kind of justice out there in the world. Only here, at Holy Communion.

28 That's why we sometimes call the Holy Communion a Working Model of the Gospel, of the Kingdom of God, the Reign of Christ.

29 You kids again: When someone asks you what's the Gospel? What's the Good News of Jesus? You can answer: Come with me on Sunday morning and see it happen! Wow!

